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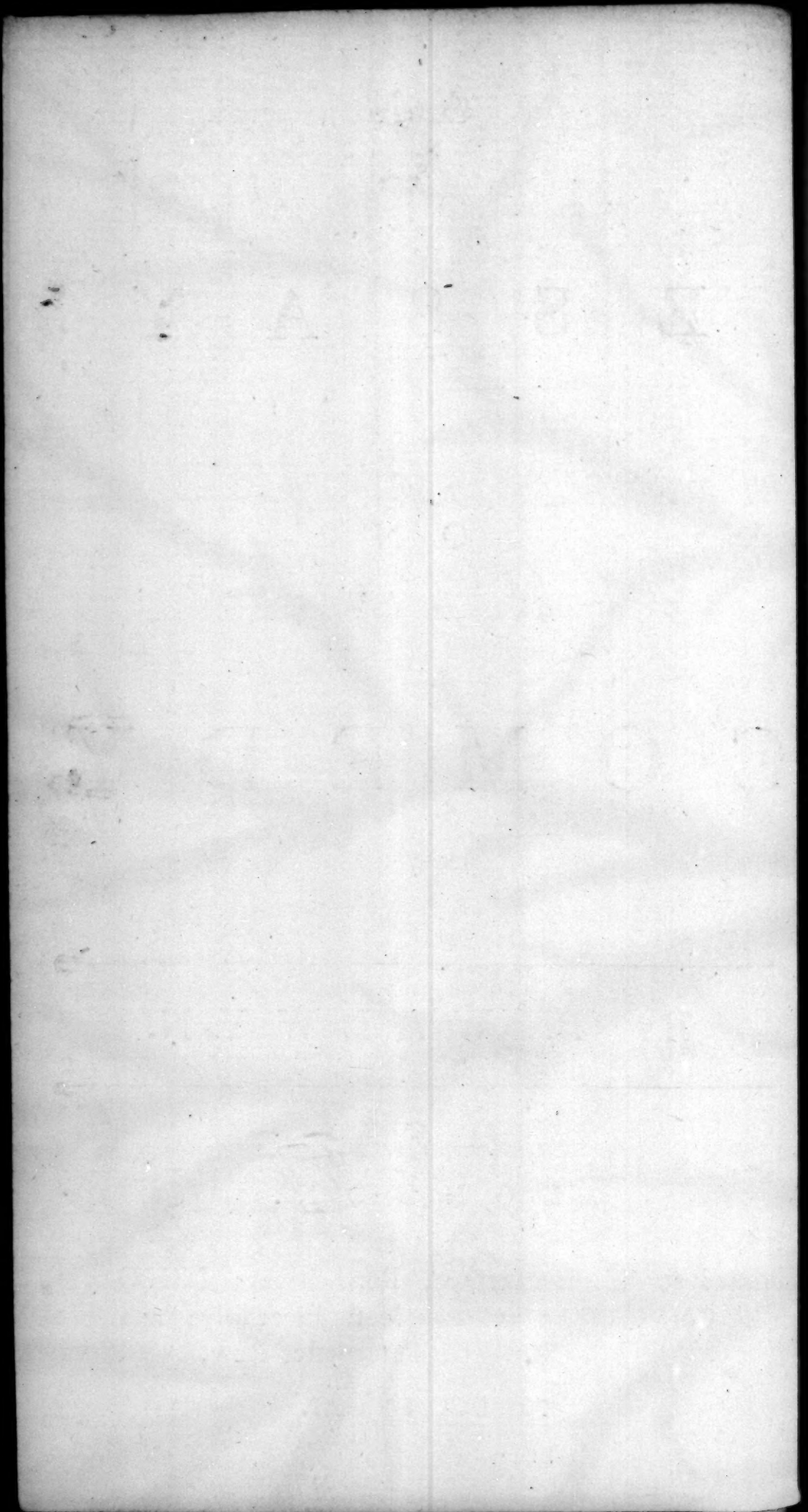
By B. WALWYN.

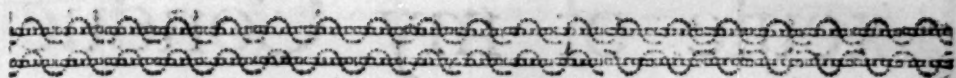
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T O

EDMUND BURKE, Esq.

S I R,

PERMIT me to inscribe the following ESSAY to Your Patronage. Your Genius and Taste for Literature will be the best Palliative for this Freedom. They are equally the Cause and

A Excuse

Excuse of my Conduct.  
For only the Liberal of  
Heart, and the Powerful  
in Mind, can encourage  
Candidates for Public  
Approbation, while they  
preserve them from the  
Shafts of Prejudice and  
Malevolence. In this  
Security, I remain,

*S I R,*

*With all possible Respect,*

*Your most obedient Servant,*

B. WALWYN.



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T H E  
P R E F A C E.

**T**HE general censure passed on the decline of Dramatic Representations, was the reason of my writing these few cursory thoughts on Comedy. In adverting to the cause, I found the general intention of this part of the Drama was sacrificed

to the partial opinions of prejudiced fashion. Every Comedy founded on its standard excellence---a general exhibition of nature's follies or vices, was laid aside for the partial representation of foppery, frippery, and fashion. The scene of nature---in not being fashionable, was discarded. Passion and sensibility were too "*low*" for this *genteel* age. Thus, we found the Dramatist either obliged to arrest our laughter with the gross broadness of his humour, or flatter our taste in displaying our elegance of choice in fantastical modes of dress, manners, etiquettes, and amusements. The medium of elegant and natural simplicity was too uninteresting. The stage was no longer the school of virtue---but of fashion. That which  
should

should restrain---had long since promoted refinement. To shew how far this is departing from the original intention of the Comic scene, and to correct some farther abuses of this most noble institution, are the intentions of the following pages, which I submit, with all due respect and deference, to the candour and opinion of my Readers.

As I have observed in the course of the following Essay my intention of producing a subsequent work on this part of the Drama, it may be proper to embrace this opportunity of acquainting the public with the nature of the performance.

My



My first intention is, to enter into a free, candid, and liberal comparison of antient and modern Comedies. In which, I hope to trace the genuine efforts of Genius, and to expose the false pretences of plagiarists, imitators, and copyists. So that it will be my first pride to rescue deceased merit from the shade of oblivion, or relieve existing genius from the pressure of prejudice.





## ADVERTISEMENT.

TO THE

PUBLIC.

*THE following ESSAY was submitted to you in one of the public prints, before I dared submit it in this form for your favour. I was desirous of receiving your approbation before I solicited your patronage. Being honoured with the former, it is my best and only surety for receiving the latter.*

*The*

*The elegant compliment of PHILO-  
DRAMA, paid my efforts in this Essay,  
I have annexed, with as much gratitude  
to the liberality of its ingenious author,  
as pride to my own reputation.*

*I have since learnt PHILO-DRAMA  
is the Gentleman to whom the Public  
are so much indebted for a most inge-  
nious and elegant history of the Modern  
Stage\*.*

\* Life of GARRICK,



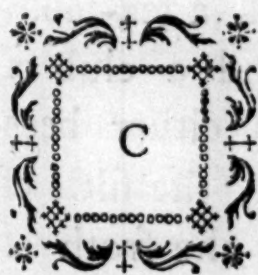


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C O M E D Y.



OMEDY is the mirror of human nature, which reflects our follies, defects, vices, and virtues; so that we may laugh at the first, ridicule the second, satirize the third, and enforce the latter. Thus we find it is not merely a picture, but a reflector of human life. If the expression may

B

be



be allowed it is a reflecting painting—in other words, a dramatic camera \*.

THE reason of my thus attempting to define what has appeared by the explications of the greatest Critics indefinite, is, no other than to shew from whence the difficulty hath arisen; they considered that only a painting, which was the real reflection of nature. Hence arose the defects of Comedy. False propositions beget false systems; and false principles—false artists. We cannot suppose the perfection of Comedy is so low from the ebb of genius, as from its many definitions being so vague and indeterminate. For we have seen genius excelling in other arts as difficult as Comedy, while in this it scarcely arises to mediocrity. Instead of holding up the stage as a “mirror to nature,” they have thought it merely a canvas to picture their own absurdities. We have found the stage, at times, a pulpit, a brothel, a tea-table, a puppet-show, an exchange, and a club of wittlings. The comic scene has either been filled with the cant of sentiment, the filth of obscenity, the tattle of repartee, the froth of

\* Tragedy is a dramatic microscope that enlarges the virtues and vices of human nature, in order to make the greater impression on the heart and mind of the observers.



pun, the jargon of broken language, or affectation of wit. These illegitimates of genius have usurped the prerogative of Comedy's natural offspring—design, character, humour, passion, and expression. Yet, the latter is entirely banished; for, when wits, or witlings more properly, of the age find a strength of comic character, beyond what they have powers either to feel or describe, they exclaim “This is a Tragedy!” They forget, or, perhaps, never knew, the Roman Critic says, “Comedy sometimes raises her voice.” What is this, but saying that incident and character may sometimes unite to raise her strength of expression to the dignity of Tragedy? Is it not one of the superior excellencies of Shakespeare's Comedies? Do we not find most of his serious scenes equal in dignity and expression to any of his Tragedies? Why then should modern genius seek to dilute a natural strength of passion with the water of puny criticism. Human nature has the same feeling—whether in a drawing-room, or a senate. It is only circumstance in both that causes the difference. If incidents excite the passion, the sock hath as much right to express its feelings as the buskin—unless Comedy must resign to Tragedy all right to natural expression.

IN my solicitude for asserting the natural dignity of Comedy, let me not lose sight of its humour, which is equally—if not more essential to its perfection. Sentiment, wit, repartee, and observation, may alternately serve her as handmaids; but humour must be our sole dependance for entertainment. Her sources of pleasing are four—whim, peculiarity, vivacity, and novelty, which she blends either in an expression, character, or incident\*. Shakespeare is remarkable for humour in the two former; Shadwell in the latter only. Here it may be proper to trace the reason of different daily Critics condemning at different times every species of humour. With such Critics, as happen to affect the humour of character and incident, humour of expression is—unnatural conceit. Others who affect expression and incident, a humourous character is *outrè*. And those who affect character and expression, a humourous incident is sacrificing natural effect to stage situation; so that a writer is sure to be condemned in proportion to the extent of his humour. May we not fear this is the reason

\* To the lessening of Comedy, it has been said—that humour belongs chiefly to low characters; when it should be considered, that a prince may be as humourously inclined as a peasant, and that humour may be as princely in its nature, as the peasant's is vulgar.

so few of our Comedies are remarkable for their humour? I have too respectful an opinion of modern genius, to suppose they have not powers to give this essential to their Comedies. I am convinced they have been, and still are, fettered by the weakness and illiberality of modern Critics.

HAVING considered the general tenour and characteristics of Comedy, it may be necessary to proceed to its component parts; the plot, characters, manners, incidents, and unities.

THE most perfect plot is certainly that which contains humour, instruction, variety, and novelty. It should neither be remarkable for simplicity nor perplexity. The first relaxes our attention, the latter confuses our judgment. The fear of being stigmatised for producing a meagre plot, has been the chief reason of comic writers producing one full of perplexities. On the other hand, the fear of their plots being deemed intricate, hath caused them to invent colloquial essays for colloquial stories. Let not genius regard those invidious criticisms, which are characterised in the following quotation: "*Non solum scientia, qua est remota a justitia calliditas potius quam sapientia est appellanda.*"—Plato *apud* Tull. "As  
" know-



“knowledge, which is remote from justice,  
 “should be termed cunning, not wisdom,”  
 writers should rather despise than dread their  
 misrepresentations.

CRITICISM has authoritatively said, an under plot is indispensable. Surely this law, like every other literary edict, has arisen more from example than necessity. Ancient comic writers made use of these plots—not through necessity, but a voluntary desire of giving the whole design a more pleasing variety. How then should it become an edict for every other writer to observe! Although their use should not be denied, yet their absolute necessity should not be countenanced; for that depends entirely on their utility. So that if one principal design is capable of a sufficient variety to render it interesting, an under plot would then only tend to confuse those scenes it was meant to embellish. In reality they too frequently weaken the fabric they were meant to support. The necessity of winding up the under plot in the Merchant of Venice, has tacked what would have been more proper for an Interlude to one of the most interesting Comedies of the immortal Shakespeare. The compleat unity of action finishes with the trial. Hence, Shakespeare’s powers cannot banish from us that unpleasing  
 emotion

emotion, which every person of taste and sensibility must experience during the fifth act. It can only be compared to the necessity of turning our attention from the ocean to a fish-pond. It is, therefore, evident that a dramatic performance, as well as an epic poem, should end with the unity of its action; and that under plots are only useful when the grand design will admit of their coalescence without confusing the scene, dividing our attention, or diminishing the strength of the general performance: And, then, they should blend with the principal action, otherwise, instead of assisting, they will retard its progress. Those who invent disjunctive under plots, are worthy of no other praise, than as being capable of representing two plays; while another's greatest pride is to represent only one, as being worthy of our attention and applause.

IN respect to character, I must beg leave to dissent from a truly eminent critic, Du Bos, who says—comic characters should be domestic. Were this true, in what light must we consider most of Shakespeare's Comedies? If the passion differed in nature, as well as in degree with the climate, neither tragic nor comic character should be foreign; for they would not be congenial with the feelings of the audience. But  
whilst

whilst Love, Hatred, Compassion, and Revenge, with the rest of the passions, have all the same complexion in every climate, the comic scene, were it only in favour of novelty and variety, may be indulged with foreign character. There is an advantage attending their use. Foreign personages, from climate, constitution, and example, are more susceptible of some passions than of others. If, therefore, they be naturally drawn, we may amend our adopted vices, from observing the bad tendency of theirs from necessity.

CHARACTERS should not be drawn with temporary traits ; for such grow obsolete with the fashion of the times. This is the fate of most of Johnson's characters—particularly those in *Every Man in his Humour*. While those in the play \* from whence most of them seem to have been taken, will exist with human nature, Captain Bobadil is a starvling Falstaff, without either his wit or his humour. Master Stephen is a tolerable likeness of Master Slender. Kately imitates Ford in all but his sense. Downright is the testy Shallow without his humour. Dame Kately is the shadow of Mrs. Ford. Thus we perceive these characters of Shakespeare are

\* *Merry Wives of Windsor.*



disguised by Johnson, with an affected resemblance to some particular persons of that period. If, therefore, this play of Johnson's hath ever pleased since, it proves the discernment of the manager, and the abilities of the performers; the first in casting the parts, the latter in playing them so satisfactorily as we have generally seen them. This suggests to me an observation, which may be as well applied to theatrical performers in general, as to every other artist;—difficulty excites endeavour, which is the parent of excellence. Thus we often find the most difficult performances more frequently excellent than such as require but little exertion. This appears the reason of the most eminent painters failing in caricatura, and eminent writers in what they found beneath their abilities and attention. Tiny artists can only excel in tiny subjects. There is a tone of genius as of music, which can never touch with the harmony of perfection a subject that is beneath its powers or compass. Therefore, the failure of artists may as often be attributed to a superior talent, as to its deficiency. So that critics would shew their discernment and liberality in not condemning failing ability, until opportunity and experience have tried its powers. To return, the difference of temporary and

eternal \* characters is particularly displayed between those of Shakespeare and of Johnson. I shall, therefore, consider the traits of the one, and the tints of the other. For in Johnson the passions are scarcely coloured, but in Shakespeare they are imitated by feeling.

ALTHOUGH it has been said—Shakespeare's Falstaff was meant to satirize a particular person of his day, every one who looks at human nature will find Falstaffs in abundance. But they will never find a Bobadil. Falstaff is a voluptuous knave, gross in sense, manners, and appearance. His pleasantry depending on his sack, and his cowardice on his selfishness. Every trait is consistent with each other. Had Shakespeare given him courage, he would have made him inconsistent with himself; the sordid and selfish may be desperate, but never courageous. They dread the loss of enjoyment in their lives, and therefore never hazard life but when emergency makes them desperate. This consistency will make Falstaff a character of entertainment whenever it may be represented. How different is the fate of Bobadil, who never pleases but from the grotesqueness of the dress, and the *outrè* humour of the

\* If I may use the expression,

performer's speech and action. The reason is, he is an empty, lying braggart, without any determinate view or principle of action. These traits are trifling, and not genuine. We seldom see pride without some merit, or vanity without some view for supporting it, or hypocrisy without design. Appearances are assumed to acquire the possession of realities. Courage is often feigned to procure safety, love to procure enjoyment, wealth to procure credit, and friendship to procure service. But the braggadisms of Bobadil are void of every end or intention, except vanity. Such a character may exist, and yet, it will rarely be found, but in Every Man in his Humour. I am aware many will say vain-boasters are common. Let them, however, produce me one without any principle of action, and I will acknowledge that one to be the Bobadil of Nature. Superficial observers may say, vanity is a means without an end. But that would be a non-entity of expression. It has no meaning. Even caprice, which seems to burlesque all principle of action, changes from a desire of novelty. Vanity only differs from pride in its object. We are vain of trifles, and proud of worth. Both have one final cause, or principle, which is consequence—the basis of self-complacence.



But surely Bobadil can have no self-complacency, unless it be escaping with whole bones from the anger of Downright. Notwithstanding farce is the caricatura of the drama, we have a character in Garrick's *Miss in her Teens*, that is of the same stamina, but far superior. It is Bobadil naturalized. I mean Captain Flash. Flash has an intention in his affected bravery. He means it to frighten his antagonist, Fribble. He is not, like many cowards, brave through fear. He appears brave through policy. In both there is reason; and reason is nature. The farical character of Flash must be, therefore, preferred to the comic character of Bobadil. Having said so much on these two leading characters, I trust they will be considered a sufficient specimen of the rest.

THUS, having elucidated the difference of SHAKESPEARE's and BEN JOHNSON's characters, it appears the first bear the seal of nature, and the latter that of paltry counterfeits. Their temporary disguise only served to render them inconsistent with themselves, as they deviate from the beauty of their archetypes. The gauze of artifice is drawn aside, and Johnson appears the grossest of plagiarists.

IN our progress through the Drama, real genius will too frequently be found the basis of honour to the literary pilferer. Writers, who are high in fame for their inventive faculties, will, at best, appear but tolerable *habit-makers* to Thalia or Melpomene. When prejudice—not taste, has cast aside an excellent garment, these gentlemen and ladies have seized on the materials—not being able to produce any of that excellence themselves, for which, by alterations and disguise, they have received, if not the honour, at least the profit of a new-invented piece of workmanship. To conceal the theft, they substitute awkwardness for elegance, indecency for dignity, and caricatura for nature. It must be confessed many have been content to acknowledge themselves the humble *botchers* of the ladies. They produce the suit only with “*alterations*.” Others, having less candour and more artifice, have given a new name to what their new fashion hath spoiled. The *names* of these dramatic habit or mantua-menders—rather spoilers, I shall particularly mention in my comparison of ancient and modern composition\*.

To proceed with Character. Authors, in affecting *genteel* character, have filled their

\* A subsequent work.

pieces with fops, fribbles, petite maitres, and puppies. Indeed one of these most remarkable *genteel* writers \* has introduced in one of his plays † a real monkey. In defence of this uncommon character, it must be allowed the most natural of any in all his plays; for he does nothing but what is natural to a monkey. But the rest of his characters are either too genteel for nature, or too gross for what he designed them to represent—good breeding. This fault must have arisen from a narrow genius under the controul of habit. His mind could not extend beyond the limits of partial acquaintance. Universal character was not within the medium of his intellect. His characters, like those of Johnson, wore the traits of the minute. Hence we find, at this time, no likeness of a Clodio, or a Foppington. Thus the merits of new performers have been sacrificed, in being tried in such parts as could not please, from their being grown out of fashion with the times. When a part is become insipid in itself, that insipidity is often attributed, very unjustly, to the want of merit in the performer. However, that this Writer may not bear alone this pressure of blame, it is the fault of most Dramatic Writers to mistake

\* Colley Cibber.

† The Double Gallant.

what



what they term gentility for elegance, and parade for dignity. Our scenes are, therefore, stuffed with the counterfeit of compliment for the sterling of genius. Routs, card-tables, tete-a-tetes, rencontres, and masquerades \* are the chief employments found for our characters. Can we then be surprised at the audience being tired of seeing that on the stage, which a too frequent repetition has rendered insipid at home? To compress what I would observe of Character, their traits should be not only perpetual—but universal. They should be congenial with human nature at all times, and in all places. A particular fop, in being known to his acquaintance, may entertain that part of the audience; but he will never be a proper character of a vain man, for nature at large to contemplate. Particular characters only suit time and acquaintance. General characters suit the world and futurity. A temporary writer is a meteor, that is lost while it glares along the atmosphere of applause. A Writer of genuine character is a fixed star, whose brilliancy is an everlasting ornament to the dome of Fame.

\* I would not be understood to mean any reflections against a certain Lady's favourite Comedy; for, in many instances, I admire her taste, elegance, and ingenuity.

WHAT has been generally considered by Critics the manners of the Drama, I have already treated in the preceding strictures on Character. The manners I mean now to consider are those of the Author.

AUTHORS have, either through choice or necessity, been too remarkable for a style or manner peculiar to themselves. It should be their first endeavour not to be distinguishable from any other—except by the generality of their excellence. A peculiar genius is but a partial copyist of nature. They resemble those statuaries whose figures are only to be known by a peculiar aspect, feature, or attitude. Where a Venus is seen to threaten, instead of invite, it may be justly concluded the Artist mistook his forte. But then the fault is easily remedied. For the figure wants only a sword to make it an excellent Bellona.

LEE and ROWE \* are two remarkable instances of this partial genius. In the first we find more of madness than of reason. In the latter we find brutality a contrast for effemi-

\* These Writers may not be thought in keeping with an Essay on Comedy. But when this peculiarity may be seen in Tragic as well as Comic Writers, surely, for the purpose of illustration, I may be indulged with their names.

nacy. A genius of universality would have given Statira the traits of softness, timidity, and tenderness, as a contrast to the violence and turbulence of Roxana. But LEE's Statira was too much his own to have the simplicity of nature and perfection. In Act III. Scene 3, she has all the enthusiastic rashness of a Roman Virago. Thus she answers the petitions of her mother, Sifigambis :

- 
- “ If you please  
 “ I'll let out life, and wash 'em \* with my blood.  
 “ But I conjure you not to rack my soul,  
 “ Nor hurry my wild thoughts to perfect madness.  
 “ Should now Darius' awful ghost appear,  
 “ And you, my mother, stand beseeching by,  
 “ I would perish to death, and keep my vow.”

THE characteristic softness of ROWE has, if I may so express it, emasculated many of his characters. His tragedies have, in this, a striking resemblance to Italian operas. The unnatural tenderness of Shore, renders him more effeminate than his prostitute spouse. The *outrè* clemency of Tamerlane neither becomes the warrior nor the man. And the doting whinings

\* Meaning the feet of Sifigambis.



of Altamont obliges us to despise him whom the Author meant we should pity.

IN order to create a variety of incident, the interest of too many beautiful scenes have been destroyed. Whenever the passions are excited, no foreign incident should be suffered to suspend the feelings; for they are the best advocates of the scenic merit. They may be considered the touchstone of the drama. If they are not interested, it is a proof of the Author's own torpidity. A writer of feeling possesses that electricity of genius which commands the sensibility of all within its sphere of action. An affectation of witticism, and a jumble of incident, is only the resource of a barren languid genius. He seeks to please us with indigested variety, when he cannot please us with nature. But, instead of relishing, we are palled by its crudities. So much are we indebted to foreign incidents. What may be termed foreign incidents are such as have not the least natural connection with the characters then in the possession of the stage. Incidents should rather arise from the passions themselves. A writer of taste, ingenuity, and feeling, will always prefer the change of circumstance from passion, to the change of passion from circumstance. When incidents

incidents apparently arise more from art than nature, it is perverting the intention of the scene. Vice should produce its punishment, Folly its ridicule, and Virtue its reward. The orator loses his power the instant we discover his art. The drama loses its effect, when the audience discovers the foreign and forced aid of contrivance.

THE unities have been the source of much contention among the critics; and, in proportion to this contention, it seems to have been to as small a purpose. For dramatic writers—particularly ours, treat the necessity of the law with that greatest of contempt—disregard. Instead of our characters being united, in either promoting or retarding one general action, each of them is seen pursuing a separate concern of his own. Our ingenuity consists in contriving the greatest of all difficulties—that of ranging a-breast the *Dramatis Personæ* in the last scene of the piece. In regard to time and place, these are changed with as little ceremony—although not with that seeming propriety, as those in a pantomime. For Harlequin then appears the magician, to whose wooden sword reason has long since resigned its faculties. Notwithstanding the licentious breach of the

unities is to be condemned, a servile observance of them is not to be recommended. Particularly of place. When the acts require a pause, then, for the relief of the eye and the liberty of invention, the place may surely change—provided the distance is within the compass of the interval. As far as the characters can be supposed to have the power to go in the time, so far—and no farther, may the scene be removed. Otherwise the change will appear as absurd as if it were in the middle of an act. In respect to length of time being confined to that of representation, it certainly is most agreeable to consistency. And yet the unity of place and time have a material difference. The impropriety of destroying the unity of place is much greater than that of time. For the change of place is the object of our first of senses—the sight; but the length of time very feebly operates on our reflection. It is, therefore, seen the change of place should be confined to the intervals of the piece. And the length of time may extend as much beyond the representation, as will not strike our reflection with the grossness of absurdity. The time of twelve hours cannot appear to reflection the least absurdity. Yet the lapse of a night, while the characters are supposed to have been at rest, will  
 seem



seem to every sense of propriety a monstrous imposition on our reason.

ALTHOUGH fancy is much inclined to favour all efforts of genius, yet when they are extravagantly beyond its powers, she then becomes the witness to criminate those blemishes, for which she would, otherwise, have been the most able advocate. Genius, while playing with the imagination of others, should confine its own antics within the limits of decorum. A writer must never tamper with the mind of either reader or auditor. Reason may be lulled, but never bullied into credulity. It is a kind of bravoism to present that for approbation, which is repugnant to common sense. A writer is less culpable for want of sense than abuse of judgment. We may pity the first, but we must condemn the latter. Trifling merit has often been observed to succeed, merely by the dullness of uniformity, while a genius of superior excellence has failed, by reason his excentricity could not confine itself to the cold formality of reason. Hence it may be again noticed—that merit oftener fails through excess than deficiency. These rules are, therefore, not offered to direct the weak, but to restrain the power-

powerful. Dulness seldom steps beyond the limits of order. For it is always seen too feeble to reach its confines.

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*LETTER on this ESSAY, with the  
Author's answer.*

S I R,

YOU could not have done me a more acceptable pleasure, than feasting me with the valuable Essay of your correspondent. I have read what you have hitherto sent of this able writer with great pleasure. I have not his first letter before me, but am so impressed with its genuine power, and the doctrine respecting Dramatic Poetry, that I can remember nothing of it but that which pleases me. In his second letter, he very amply justifies the use of foreign Characters, in opposition to Du Bos for, this very unanswerable reason, that the passions are the same in all climates, and in all ages. But however I may reverence the opinions of this author, I must beg leave to differ with him in  
some

some lesser matters. The most material objection I have to propose, is within the compass of a very limited understanding, for it is mere matter of fact. I am afraid we are all apt to flatter ourselves in finding out resemblances which exist no where but in our own minds.

I PERFECTLY agree with the Author that characters should be drawn with temporary traits. I grant too, that the portraits of Shakespeare are made to last till Doomsday; while the lustring and fashionable shadows of the day drawn by Ben Johnson, grow obsolete in the wearing of them. But he has unhappily mistaken his aim. The characters of Every Man in his Humour could not be taken from Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor; for the former play was prior to the latter about three years: this he will find authenticated in the last variorum edition of Shakespeare, published by Johnson and Stevens. We might with equal truth, and with some plausibility, say that our divine bard borrowed his characters of Falstaff, Ford, Slender, Shallow, and Mrs. Ford, from the Bobadil, Kitely, Master Stephen, Downright, and Dame Kitely of Johnson. For my own part, I can see no family likeness, either in the personage or conduct of the two plays. They are both strongly discriminated. Poor  
Old



Old Ben is fallen so low in the opinion of the public, that it would be a charity to give him a lift where we possibly can. The Slender of Shakespeare is not, in my humble judgment, so proper a character for Comedy, as the Master Stephen of Johnson; the latter is the Fop of Fashion, the other, the Fool of Nature; and for that reason no object of comic mirth. We may as well laugh at the lame and the blind, as the meer changling, the poor abortive escape of propagation. Though I do not entirely approve his criticism on Bobadil, I admire his masterly outline of Falstaff.

I COULD wish your correspondent had not been altogether so severe upon the dramatic characters of Colley Cibber. What! is Clodio no character? Shall I presume to differ so far from this fine writer, as to say that every day of our lives we see him in each pert, vain, illiterate, affected, forward coxcomb we meet. Does the present age afford no such characters? Then, indeed we have no Clodios—*Felicia tempora!* Foppington is drawn with more vigour than Clodio, and still exists, though not in the modus, not in the meer mechanical outside, in the insignificant ceremony, and the drawling affected tone. Though we can yet produce something even of this;—how many,  
from

from soft effeminate affectation, pronounce *M-a-i-n-sfield* for Mansfield? Was not the conversation of a late Minister of State, who in a fit of lunacy dispatched himself at a Nobleman's house on a visit, infected with that strange womanish elongation of syllables?

FOPPINGTON, in CIBBER'S Careless Husband, is a vicious young man of fashion, who stretches the politeness of the gentleman into ceremony and affectation. He wants not understanding in a good degree, but disfigures it by his *outrè* manner: he is good-natured; for when his folly is detected, he can laugh with the laughers; but the strong trait of his character is vanity, for he aims at the reputation of making conquests in his amours. And this I will presume to say is a character that will last to the end of the world. If Foppington fails on the stage, the fault is the actor's, not the writer's.

I WILL appeal to this gentleman's candour, and with greater confidence, because he is a man of genius: the strongest are ever the most generous, they have enough to give away, while those of an inferior class are niggardly from their poverty.

WILL the Author, after mature deliberation, refuse Cibber the honour of producing on the stage three excellent dramatic characters? In the Careless Husband, Sir Charles Easy, and Lady Betty Modish; and Maria in the Non-Juror? I will not mention Lady Townly, because he is said to be assisted in drawing that finished part of female gaiety, by Sir John Vanbrugh.

I am, your's,

PHILO-DRAMA.

*The Answer.*

I BEGAN my Strictures on the Drama with a determination not to answer any one who might think proper to become my adversary. But the liberality of PHILO-DRAMA has conquered my resolution. So that, notwithstanding this answer is not meant as a Concession to the Justness of his Remarks, it is a Return for the Politeness of his behaviour. I could, therefore, wish what may follow might be as equal a compliment to his Propriety as to his Ingenuity. Should it prove otherwise, he must not condemn his own Abilities, but the Poverty of his Cause.

WHEN



WHEN an objection is made to the stating of a circumstance, Demonstration—not Probability, should be its basis. To subvert my position of the characters in Every Man in his Humour having been taken from the Merry Wives of Windsor, he observes it is *authenticated* \* in the variorum edition of Shakespeare, published by Johnson and Stevens, that the Merry Wives of Windsor is subsequent to the other by three years. He must, surely, have read this work very superficially, or he would not have taken what is candidly confessed by the Authors themselves to be only probable for the absolute demonstration of authenticity. Not to invalidate a work replete with ingenuity and elegance, nor to fix on him the weakness of credulity, do I observe that the probability is more in favour of the Merry Wives of Windsor being previous to Every Man in his Humour. Allowing the Second Part of Henry the Fourth to be written in 1598—six years after the time fixed for Henry the Sixth, which has every appearance of impropriety and improbability, there is great

\* Although a matter may be authentic from circumstance which is not demonstrable from fact, I use the word as it was meant by PHILO-DRAMA—a substitute for certainty.

reason to believe the *Merry Wives of Windsor* was written in the same year. As Queen Elizabeth was so much pleased with Falstaff, it is natural to suppose her command to see the Fat Knight in love, was no long time after the first representation of Henry the Fourth. Female pleasure and curiosity are not characterized by a delay of gratification. More especially when they arise in the heart of those who have more power to command than patience to wait the leisure of opportunity. Besides, the hurry\* in which Shakespeare wrote the play, is a strong evidence of its being an immediate command, in consequence of a new and, therefore, more strongly raised curiosity. When reasons—not facts, must be the ground of opinion, every relative circumstance proves weighty in the scale of belief. Hence, in proof of my observation, I would take in the acknowledged superiority of Shakespeare. Although he borrowed his plots from Novels, and some scenes from the Antients, yet no positive proof can be given of his either taking plots, scenes, incidents, or characters, from any of his contemporaries. On the contrary, while he borrowed the main parts of the fable, he is remarked for his wonderful facility and power in the inven-

\* It is said he wrote it in a fortnight.

tion of characters in nature, and the creation of characters beyond nature. He did not, like other puny writers of the scene, make nature monstrous. He made monsters natural. Is this a man to be supposed dependent on a Johnson for character? Forbid it genius, judgment, and I had almost said, conviction.

IN attempting to flatter the memory of Johnson, he seems, like other flatterers, to have lain aside the dignity of his reason. On the basis of his argument, he says that Shakespeare may, *with some plausibility*, be said to have borrowed the Merry Wives of Windsor from Every Man in his Humour. And in the next period he can find no family likeness between them. Where then is the *plausibility* of either being taken from the other. Since he has, then, undermined his own argument, it would be cowardly to make a further pass on the vanquished. But having insinuated that we are apt to flatter ourselves with resemblances, which exist no where but in our own minds, I will briefly attempt to shew these resemblances are so strong in themselves, that one would imagine to the eye of reason, they require only to be mentioned to discover the similarity of their traits. This is not directed to prejudice. For that is invulnerable to every shaft of conviction. But  
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as I attribute the mistake to inattention, the greater hope have I of convincing him, that instead of prejudice having distorted their features, neglect has left undrawn the flimsy veil, which seems to *his* view, to have obscured the likenesses. Has not Falstaff the traits of vanity, boasting, and cowardice? Are not these the only traits of Bobadil? Is not Ford jealous without cause, and passionate without revenge? For all the punishment Falstaff receives is from the hurt, pride, and indignation of Mrs. Ford, and Mrs. Page. Can it be said that Kitley has any other traits, or circumstances? His observation in respect to the Fool of Nature not being a proper character for Comedy, does him honour; but this greatly depends in what light that fool is placed. If placed in a ridiculous light, we must then despise the author, and pity the character. Should he be placed in merely a risible light, he then becomes an innocent uninjured character to enliven the scene. Ridicule is Satire seated in the vehicle of Mirth. Risibility is Innocence seated in the vehicle of Humour. Shakespeare's Slender is not a character of ridicule, but of risibility; but Johnson's Stephen, being ridiculous, blends our contempt with our laughter. This reply to his observations on Slender and

Stephen

Stephen is rather too early; but as the character followed Ford, I could not avoid these observations. Further, in discriminating a difference of these characters, he has omitted the leading trait of Stephen, which absolutely renders him Slender transposed from Shakespeare to Johnson. That he is the Fool of Nature I admit; but is not Stephen the Fool of Nature, as well as the Fop of Fashion? Indeed the Fop of Fashion, although too generally the Fool of Nature, gives him too great a dignity. He mistakes the grotesque braggadisms, and *outrè* actions of Bobadil, for fashion. The Fop of Fashion is he whose only merit is to be fashionable. But Stephen, being destitute of all other ideas, neither has, nor can have, any just idea of fashion. From this trait of simplicity arises the only humour of his character—the awkward imitation of Bobadil; and the only difference perceptible in Shallow and Downright, is the first being testy with brutality—the latter with humour and pleasantry. When leading traits are thus evidently the same, it is beneath weakness not to admit of their resemblance. All their discrimination is, in the plagiarist, but a superficial disguise to conceal their likeness.

PHILO-DRAMA seems to be particularly hurt at my severe treatment of Colley Cibber. While my Strictures continue, it shall be my endeavour not to decry the fame of either deceased or existing merit. And even the faults of the living I would not aggravate—that neither their character nor support may receive an injury. My endeavours will be to remove the perversion of prejudice in favour of Block-heads, to the great detriment of real—though pining Genius. I would rescue the fame of deceased ability from obscurity, and give the hand of encouragement to living and deserving exertions. In this arduous attempt, should any impropriety escape me, a hint from the ingenious and ingenuous will be always gratefully acknowledged.

THAT neither Clodio, nor Foppington, can now exist, is self-evident to reflection. No Fop has any other trait than the mode of the times. This mode receives tints—not traits, from disposition, education, and circumstance. Hence, we have lively and austere Fops, vulgar and genteel Fribbles, with shabby and splendid Petite-Maitres. As these tints are subject to all times, all Fops may be subjected to their colours; but as the existence of a Fop depends on that which necessarily changes with the day,

no



no longer than the day can the character of such a Fop have any resemblance in nature. Indeed, the same being changes with the whim of the hour. How then can he be supposed to last for ages? Is not this a demonstration that all such characters are unavoidably temporary in themselves? Not to dwell longer on what is so evident, I shall proceed further than my position of there being *now* no Clodios. It will appear, from the character itself, that it *never* had an existence. And yet I think this no proof of *Philo-Drama's* exclamation, "*Felicia Tempora.*" The cause of foppery is vanity. Every Fop, is, therefore, tender of debasement. Whatever militates against his self-complacency, must be a wound whose smart no dissimulation can hide. But Clodio is deprived of Angelica, disarmed by his brother, and duped by his own presumption; yet all this disgrace and disappointment he bears with the apathy of a Stoic. Although Fops have no relative sensibility, none are more susceptible of their own ignomy. A man may be so spirited as to bid defiance to care and misfortune. But that spirit is of too noble a nature to stoop so low as vainly to contemplate his person, perfections, and gallantries. The distinction of such an incongruous Fop, and such

a natural spirited character, cannot be so well contrasted as between the Mercutio of Shakespeare, and the Clodio of Cibber. The first is gay without foppery, and spirited without insensibility. Cibber seems to have copied this spirit in Clodio, and, by making him a fop, has annihilated the natural consistency of his character. Indeed their traits are so dissonant, that they destroy each other's effect. Clodio might have been lively, but not insensible to his own indignity. The only expression of nature I have found in his character was, when imagining himself in danger, he exclaims, "Ah, poor Clodio, would thou wert fairly in a storm at sea again." Here is nature, passion, and propriety. Whatever danger we may have recently escaped, it is natural for impending danger to lessen the former so far, as to prefer it to what may happen. In this, fancy relates as much to our pains as our pleasures. Both are magnified by expectation, and diminished by reflection.

FOPPINGTON has not the consequence of vice. He is too trifling to be either vicious or virtuous. His understanding is merely composed of frippery, bagatelles, and fashionable absurdities. His good-nature is artifice to screen the wounds which his vanity has received,

ceived. However devoid of principle a man is in himself, no Foppington will be found in life to boast of his depravity to those whom he is assured are making him the object of their derision and contempt. But Cibber's Foppington does this, and, therefore, like Clodio, can have had no natural prototype. Hence it may be concluded, Cibber combined the whims of several, to compose one individual. Thus we perceive his characters have scarce a tint of genuine propriety. As an instance of his extreme politeness, I transcribe this:—"Why that, for my part, I had rather have a plain  
 " slice of my wife's woman, than my guts full  
 " of e'er an Ortolan Duchess in Christendom."

As I mean to criticize the works of Cibber more particularly in my future Essays, I must defer answering PHILO-DRAMA's last paragraph until a more convenient opportunity. Interim, I remain,

Your very humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

F I N I S.



received. However devoid of principle a man is in himself, no Popington will be found in life to part of his depravity to those whom he is situated are making him the object of their detestation and contempt. But Clibber's Popington does this, and therefore, like Clibber, can have had no natural prototype. Hence it may be concluded, Clibber combined the whims of several, to compose one individual. Thus we perceive his characters have scarce a trace of genuine propriety. As an instance of his extreme looseness, I transcribe this:—"Why, that, for my part, I had rather have a plain 'black' my wife's woman, than my genteel one of an Orphan School in Christendom."

As I mean to edit the works of Clibber, more particularly in my future Essay, I must defer answering Burke-Drama's last question, and a more convenient opportunity, I remain,

Your very humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.